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CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
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SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

- [1](#)1. U.S.-Israel Relations
- [1](#)2. Mideast

Key stories in the media:

Israel Radio quoted Fatah members as saying that Israel should release jailed Fatah leader Marwan Barghouti, who came in third in the movement's Central Committee elections. Media quoted Minority

Affairs Minister Avishay Braverman (Labor) as saying: QIn light of the election results, we must consider releasing [Barghouti] in order to create a moderate and strong political leadership among the Palestinians.Q Industry, Trade and Labor Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer (Labor Party) told Israel Radio this morning that he favors a QcourageousQ decision to release Barghouti. In another interview with the radio, Culture and Sport Minister Limor Livnat (Likud) said that Barghouti is a terrorist leader and that he should not be released. Interviewed this morning, opposition and Kadima Chairwoman Tzipi Livni (on IDF Radio) and former (Kadima) Internal Security Minister Avi Dichter (on Israel Radio) vehemently opposed calls from both the government and Knesset for Marwan Barghouti's release. The media reported that PLO Chairman Mahmoud Abbas has emerged victorious from the vote, as almost all his preferred candidates won seats in the decision-making body. The media noted that QmythologicalQ (Maariv) leaders from the Tunis generation -- Ahmed Qurei (Abu Ala) and Nabil ShaQath) -- were removed from the Fatah direction.

HaQaretz reported that Israel has begun a quiet diplomatic campaign to learn the whereabouts of Guy Hever, a soldier who went missing from the Golan Heights 12 years ago. The process began when Japan's Middle East envoy delivered a message to Syria for Israel. HaQaretz says that it is not even clear if Hever is in Syria, but that the move represents a significant change in Israel's official policy in the case.

Maariv quoted a senior Israel defense source as saying that Israel retains an actual military option to counter Iran's nuclear program -- even on its own. Maariv and Makor Rishon-Hatzofe also reported that the U.S. administration is debating whether to invite Israel to the global nuclear security summit scheduled to take place in Washington in March 2010, due to Israel's ambiguity policy. Conversely, Maariv presumed that, should Israel not be invited, this would cause great tension between it and the U.S., and probably do nothing to reduce the criticism against Israel in the course of the conference.

The Jerusalem Post reported that a delegation of Israeli security officials secretly traveled to Jordan last week in an attempt to assuage concerns that Israel plans to transfer Palestinians from the West Bank to the Hashemite Kingdom. The purpose of the visit was to ensure that strategic ties between the countries are not harmed. The visit was scheduled as part of Israeli efforts to ease Jordanian concerns regarding a proposal that National Union Knesset Member Arie' Eldad made in the Knesset two months ago that Palestinians be given Jordanian citizenship.

Major media quoted the Lebanese daily Al-Akhbar as saying yesterday that senior Egyptian security officials will visit Damascus this week for talks with Hamas leaders on a prisoner exchange that could see the release of Gilad Shalit. Israel Radio quoted the London-based A-Sharq Al-Awsat as saying that some progress has been made in the talks with Hamas.

All media reported that yesterday PM Benjamin Netanyahu visited the Hatzerim Air Force Base in the Negev and sat in the cockpit of one of the F-15 fighter jets, which experts believe would lead a possible Israeli attack on Iran's nuclear installations. The media also quoted the PM as saying that Qthere are no winds of war blowingQ along the Lebanese border.

Israel Radio cited Peace Now's criticism about the construction of a new neighborhood in the settlement of Kochav YaQakov, near Ramallah.

The NGO says it was built on private Palestinian land. The Jerusalem Post reported that yesterday Binyamin Regional Council head Avi Ro'eh canceled a deal he had made with the IDF a day earlier to voluntarily evacuate three caravans at the unauthorized Bnei Adam outpost, backing away from a fight with right-wing activists and settlers at the site who oppose any compromise move.

The Jerusalem Post reported that diplomatic sources told the newspaper yesterday that that Jerusalem and Washington are currently discussing whether the city of Ariel constitutes one of the

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settlement blocs where -- under a compromise agreement being worked out -- construction that has already begun can continue.

Major media reported that the Counter-Terrorism Bureau in the PMQs Office warned Israelis to exercise caution when traveling abroad during the Jewish holidays, due to the assessment that Hizbullah may try to attack Israeli citizens, and urged citizens in Sinai to leave immediately. In issuing its report yesterday, which it does regularly before Jewish New Year and Passover every year, the bureau stated the bulletin "did not involve new warnings, but rather a current assessment." It cautioned Israelis to be vigilant regarding anything unusual, and to refrain from traveling to Muslim countries subject to specific travel warnings. These countries include Jordan, Morocco, and Egypt (including Sinai). Particularly high-level warnings have been issued regarding Sinai. An estimated 40,000 Israelis are currently there, most of them Israeli Arabs on vacation before Ramadan begins on August 20. Other countries subject to travel warnings include Colombia, especially in light of specific information about the potential for attacks on Israelis providing security assistance to the Colombian government. High-level threats also have been issued for the Kashmir region, Mindanao in the Philippines, and parts of southern Thailand. The Counter-Terrorism Bureau also recommends deferring unessential travel to Kenya (especially coastal areas), Bangladesh, Nigeria, and Tajikistan. Despite the warnings, Israeli tour operators are organizing trips to Jordan, Morocco and Kenya, as well as other countries where the threat is deemed high. Arkia Airlines is offering a safari package to Kenya and Uganda. Organized groups and individual Israelis visit Morocco regularly.

Leading media reported that on Monday Israeli vacationers and Arabs were involved in a significant brawl on the Greek island of Rhodes. Fifteen Arabs attacked the Israeli group, which later struck back.

The Jerusalem Post reported that playwrights presenting works as the New York Fringe Festival later this week will bring Israel and Jewish themes to the edge of the stage.

The Jerusalem Post reported that the left-wing rights organization charged in a report released yesterday that, seven months after the end of Operation Cast Lead, Gaza still lacks sufficient electricity supplies, sanitation, and health care for the civilian population.

The Jerusalem Post printed a Jewish Telegraphic Agency report that seven Israeli left-wing rights groups wrote to President Obama supporting the role of former Irish President Mary Robinson as a recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom, which will be handed out today. A number of major American groups, including AIPAC and the ADL, have criticized the choice of Robinson because they feel she did not do enough to stop expressions of anti-Israel and anti-Semitic hatred during the 2001 Durban conference on racism over which she presided as the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

The Jerusalem Post reported that yesterday members of the extremist Westboro Baptist Church, known for its anti-gay and anti-Semitic rhetoric, protested in front of several Jewish institutions in New York.

Finance Minister Yuval Steinitz was quoted as saying during an interview with Israel Radio yesterday that the Bank of Israel's decision to abandon its scheduled daily dollar purchases and to continue buying only on an as-needed basis is a step in the right direction. "We have a real problem, and it is not caused by speculators. It's caused by the dollar weakening all over the world," Steinitz said. Steinitz confirmed that the central bank and the Finance Ministry have coordinated the matter.

Maariv reported that former U.S. President George H.W. Bush has been invited to Israel for the cornerstone-laying ceremony of an Ethiopian Jewry heritage center in Rehovot. The event will apparently take place in a month's time. The newspaper noted that Bush has been deeply involved with the issue of Ethiopian Jews.

The Jerusalem Post cited the results of a survey conducted by pollster Dick Morris from July 22 to 24 among 500 American Jews who voted for Barack Obama. The poll was sponsored by the Traditional Values Coalition, an evangelical Christian group.

- Some 58% think President Obama is doing a good job promoting peace in the Middle East.

- However, 55% said that the President is Qnaive in thinking that the Palestinians would make peaceQ and that Palestinians Qwill just use the new land as a base to attack Israel like they did in Gaza.
- 40% said they believe Obama is doing a good job in his effort to stop Iran from developing nuclear weapons.

1. U.S.-Israel Relations:

Block Quotes:

"Diplomats Who Promote Our Mind-Set"

The independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (8/12): QWhen Avigdor Lieberman was appointed director general of the Prime Minister's Office, after Benjamin Netanyahu was elected prime minister in 1996, Lieberman fired the office's legal advisor, telling him: QWe're looking for people who share our mind-set.Q The public dressing down that Lieberman and Netanyahu (via Qsources in his bureauQ) administered to Nadav Tamir, the Consul-General in Boston, after the publication of an internal memo in which Tamir warned of a crisis in Israel's relationship with the United States, show that neither time nor changing professional positions have done anything to shift their attitude. Our prime and foreign ministers still prefer Qpeople who share our mind-setQ and reject the existence of a professional civil service whose assessments differ from the politicians' orders and official propaganda.... Israel's representatives abroad are obligated to warn of diplomatic dangers, just as IDF Intelligence and the Mossad are obligated to warn of impending war. Do the prime and foreign ministers also insist that the intelligence agencies adjust their assessments to the government's political views? There was in fact a hint of this in the Prime Minister's demand that the head of the Shin Bet security service not offer assessments on diplomatic issues. But there is great danger in neutralizing the professionals and turning them into mouthpieces for the parties in power. Netanyahu and Lieberman must allow the professionals to do their jobs.

2. Mideast:

Block Quotes:

I. "With All Due Respect"

Eytan Haber, veteran op-ed writer and assistant to the late prime minister Yitzhak Rabin, opined in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (8/12): QThe vast majority of Israelis do not have a clue about where [the E-1 area] is and why it is important. Well, it is located between the heights of Mt. Scopus and MaQaleh Adumim. It would mainly split the Palestinian population, prevent the creation of a bridge between the sides, and -- as far as the Palestinians are concerned Q isolate Jerusalem. The Israelis know this and so do the Palestinians. The Palestinians and the Americans cannot imagine allowing Israel to link Jerusalem with MaQaleh Adumim and create a metropolis.... [For almost two decades], the Americans have been adamant about this.... [Knesset Speaker] Ruby Rivlin, [Interior Minister] Eli Yishai, and others are aware of the truth: There will be no construction in E-1. I almost feel like telling them: QGo ahead, build; weQll see you playing heroes with the Americans.

II. "Palestinian Street within AbbasQs Grasp"

Palestinian affairs correspondent Avi Issacharoff wrote in HaQaretz (8/12): QA week after the Sixth Fatah Convention opened, its chairman Mahmoud Abbas could finally sit back, relax and smile. The QRaisQ is beginning to shine through as the undisputed winner. Not only did he manage to convene the conference, an achievement that eluded his legendary predecessor Yasser Arafat, but the huge event went through almost without incident.... Abbas was unanimously elected to chair the movement, and the new leadership can boast some more popular, slightly younger faces. Even if the QyoungstersQ are already past 50, they represent a cohort believed to be less corrupt and of impeccable patriotic record. Many were jailed in Israel

(Jibril Rajoub, Marwan Barghouti, Mohammad Dahlan, Hussein al-Sheikh) or were Fatah members in Lebanon (Mahmoud al-Aloul, Muhammad al-Madani, Jamal Muheisen, and others). And there was another winner at the conference: Fatah itself. The organization showed the Palestinian street that democracy was more than just a slogan. Last Wednesday, Hussam Hader, a Tanzim activist from the Balata refugee camp, stood up at the conference hall and told Abbas that at this conference he was just as good as any other Fatah member, and therefore must let his critics speak. Such conduct would not have been tolerated in Arafat's time.

III. "ObamaQs Patronizing Approach to Peacemaking"

Contributor Gil Troy, a professor of history at McGill University on leave in Jerusalem, wrote in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (8/12): QUnfortunately, so far, while Obama has improved his standing in the Muslim world -- and the world generally -- he has humiliated Israel, emboldened the Palestinians and failed to deliver. His antics have made Israel look like a third-rate client state, and have fed the misimpression that it is the worldQs bad boy, the source of all Middle Eastern headaches.... Obama has to figure out how to reassure Israelis that the violence that resulted from the Oslo concessions and the Gaza withdrawal will not be repeated. The President has to look at the agreements both Clinton and Ehud Olmert negotiated in their respective final days but could not sell to the Palestinians. And he has to find some levers to push the Palestinians to compromise. As a memoirist and orator, Obama has shown he is a great story teller. Right now, the Israeli narrative focuses on the unfortunate realities of Palestinian rejectionism. Unless and until Obama can figure out how to change that plotline -- with facts on the ground -- his present tactics will continue to embarrass Israelis, delight Palestinians, and make America look impotent.

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